Remarks/Arguments

I. Examiner's Rejection

Claims 1-12 and 14-28 are pending in this matter. Claim 13 has been cancelled. Claims 1, 8 , and 16 are independent claims. Claims 1-12 and 14-28 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over Hunter (U.S. Patent No. 5,243,654), in view of Brookner (U.S. Patent No. 6,098,032). As set out below, Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

II. Background of Invention

Applicant's invention is directed to the maintenance of mail processing systems. Specifically, Applicant's invention addresses employing a plurality of sensors to monitor the status of a mail processing system to improve reliability by reducing downtime attributed to maintenance items. For example, the monitored information may include information related to preventative maintenance items such as lubrication, cleaning, and replenishment of consumables. Moreover, the monitored information can include information related to the mail documents processed by the system including weight and destination addresses.

The monitored information can be transmitted to a processor system where it is compared to stored reference values or one or more customer profiles. As a result of the comparison, the processor system generates recommendations for preventive maintenance and/or feedback demographic information to increase system efficiency and maximize cost savings. In addition, based on the monitored information, the mail processing system may also generate and transmit, to the processor system, recommended maintenance action items (proactive generation).

III. Claims 1-12 and 14-34 are not obvious over Hunter, in combination with Brookner.

As noted in Applicant's prior response, Hunter fails to disclose a plurality of sensors and collecting system data. Applicant respectfully submits that Brookner fails to supply, at least, these missing elements.

Independent claims 1 and 8 recite, among other things, "a plurality of sensors for collecting system data". In addition, independent claims 8 and 16 recite "a comparator for comparing the measured data with predetermined sets of data" and "comparing the monitored parameter with a predetermined value to determine a comparison result", respectively. Hunter fails to disclose these elements. Further, these elements are not supplied by Brookner.

A plurality of sensors refers to more than one sensor. Hunter discloses a single sensor, sensor 210. Sensor 210 is connected to meter 220 and provides the current reading of the meter. (col. 6, lines 63-64). Further, meter 220 is not related to postage meters or the maintenance aspects of a mail processing system. Instead, meter 220 is the utility meter referenced in figs. 4, 5A, 5B, and 6.

In fact, Hunter is directed to a locking device 212 which can also be applied to utility meters. (col. 6, line 66 – col. 7, line 4). Simply put, locking device 212 can lock out the supply of electricity, gas or water, depending on the type of utility meter. As such, sensor 210 does not address maintenance items or information related to mail documents.

Sensor 210 is solely responsible for monitoring the "reading" from meter 220. Therefore, not only does Hunter fail to disclose a plurality of sensors, as recited in independent claims 1 and 8, there is no disclosure, teaching, or suggestion that additional sensors are either necessary or practical with respect to the locking device 212. At a minimum, since Hunter discloses a single locking device 212 employed with a single sensor 210, Hunter teaches away from using a plurality of sensors, as required in the claims.

The Examiner's reliance on Brookner for the plurality of sensors is misplaced. Initially, Brookner does not disclose, teach or suggest multiple sensors, as recited in the claims. Brookner's processor 16 is instructed to monitor preselected system parameters. The Examiner claims that this description "suggests" multiple sensors. Applicant disagrees. If the Examiner is making an inherency argument, Applicant disputes that multiple sensors are inherent in the description by Brookner, as explained below.

Initially, Broker's system parameters are not the same as, or similar to, the current invention's system data. Regarding claim 1, the plurality of sensors collect system data. System data is given a specific definition and is defined as "data related to the conditions of the mail processing equipment. Such information may include, for example, wear and tear of system parts, the system throughput, the efficiency at which the system is operating, the operating conditions of the system, such as operating temperature, pressure, and the like." (Specification at pg. 5, lines 6-10). Therefore, given the definition of system data, a plurality of sensors are needed to monitor the same.

Brookner merely describes a processor 16 that monitors multiple system-board-level items, via system bus 30, (system parameters), none of which require a "sensor" or separate "sensors." Instead, if anything is suggested by Brookner, it is that Brookner implies a typical operating system for processor 16 which gathers system-board-level information, via system bus 30, such as UNIX, LINUX, Windows 2000, or Windows XP). Accordingly, Brookner fails to supply the plurality of sensors which are missing from Hunter. In fact, it is safe to say that Brookner fails to disclose, teach, or suggest even one sensor.

Even if Brookner disclosed, taught, or suggested multiple sensors, there is no motivation for the asserted combination. As noted above, because Hunter discloses a single locking device 212 employed with a single sensor 210, Hunter teaches away

from using a plurality of sensors, as required in the claims. Accordingly, one skilled in the art would not replace Hunter's single sensor with multiple sensors, even if Brookner taught multiple sensors.

Moreover, and again as noted above, Broker's system-board-level parameters are not the same as, or similar to, the claimed system data. Further, the "reading" of Hunter's meter 220 would not be compatible with Broker's system-board-level monitoring. Finally, neither reference discloses, teaches, or suggests sensing system data, As such, the alleged combination would not produce the invention, as claimed. Therefore, it would not be reasonable for one skilled in the art to replace Hunter's sensor 210 with multiple sensors for sensing system-board-level parameters.

Turning to the comparator of claim 8, and comparing in claim 16, the Examiner now asserts that Hunter "suggests" (not, "discloses") comparing a stored value with a measured value. Actually, the cited portion of Hunter describes certain prior art which compares a combination value entered by a user with a subsequently produced "combination" based on another "entered amount.". (col. 2, lines 8-14). Both the "combination" and "entered amount" are entered contemporaneously by a user. Accordingly, this portion of Hunter fails to disclose, teach or suggest a comparison with any form of predetermined value or data, as recited in independent claims 8 and 16 Moreover, as noted above, Brookner is incompatible with Hunter and would not produce the invention, as claimed. As such, even if Brookner is used to teach a "comparison", the asserted combination still remains improper.

For at least the above reasons, independent claims 1, 8 and 16 are not obvious over Hunter, in view of Brookner. In addition, since claims 2-7 depend from claim 1, claims 9-12, 14-15 and 29-33 depend from claim 8, and claims 17-28 and 34 depend from claim 16, these dependant claims should also be allowed at least in view of their respective dependencies, and for the above reasons with respect to independent claims 1, 8 and 16.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the claims of this application are now in a condition for allowance and favorable action thereon is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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